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TAGS: [ELTN](#) [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CA](#) [US](#)  
SUBJECT: Ontario on Track to Eliminate Trash Shipments by 2010?

Ref: (A) 08 Toronto 107  
(B) 07 Toronto 124 (AND PREVIOUS)

Sensitive But Unclassified -- Please protect accordingly.

1. (U) Summary: Two recently released reports make it difficult to judge exactly how close Ontario is to its goal of phasing out shipments of municipal trash to Michigan by the end of 2010. A 40% reduction by 2009 was set as an interim target. According to U.S. media reports, the reductions appear to fall short of the agreement. By contrast, Ontario officials from the Ministry of the Environment tell us they are confident Ontario is on its way to meeting its goal. End Summary.

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2006 Waste Reduction Agreement  
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2. (U) Michigan and Ontario leaders struck a deal in 2006 which obligated the province to phase out shipments of municipal solid waste (MSW) to Michigan by the end of 2010. The regional municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) -- York, Peel, and Durham, and the City of Toronto -- were to reduce MSW shipments by 20% in 2007, and by another 20% by the end of 2008, based on actual amounts shipped in 2005. In return, Michigan's Senators agreed not to pursue amendments to the Homeland Security Appropriation Bill (SA 4657 and SA 4617), or to pursue similar future measures that would allow states to prohibit the importation of MSW. The 2006 agreement did not cover industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) waste shipments to Michigan from the province, primarily from non-municipally-managed sources.

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The Reports  
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3. (U) The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) reported on January 30 that Ontario sent about 2% less trash to state landfills in fiscal 2008, ending September 30, compared with a year earlier. Canadian trash coming into Michigan has dropped more than 11% since peaking in 2006. Ontario shipped 10.7 million cubic yards of trash to Michigan in 2008 (nearly 19% of the state's 57.1 million cubic-yard total imported MSW).

4. (U) Conversely, according to a report released on January 30 by Toronto city officials, Toronto has cut trash loads to Michigan by 50% over the last five years. All five GTA municipalities together reduced their 2007 MSW shipments to within 1% of the agreed upon target. While final numbers for 2008 are not yet available, the number of tractor trailers hauling Toronto's MSW to Michigan has dropped from 140 in 2003 to about 70 each day, according to the city. Additional unspecified truckloads come from the other GTA municipalities.

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Waste Diversion  
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5. (U) Approximately 60% of Toronto's waste reduction reportedly is

a result of individual household and industrial waste diversion. People are recycling more in large part because of increased fees imposed by the city of Toronto. When Toronto began its waste shipments to Michigan in 1998, 30 truckloads a day crossed the border. That number grew when Toronto's only active landfill closed and Michigan became Toronto's primary landfill site. When the Michigan contract expires in 2010, Toronto's remaining solid waste will be sent to the Green Lane and Warwick landfill sites in southwestern Ontario. Waste will also be diverted through composting and biomass conversion to electricity and other energy sources, as well as other measures. Other GTA municipalities have switched to landfill sites in their regions, within the province and the Provincial government has authorized the expansion of several landfills located within the province.

¶6. (SBU) While at first glance the Michigan and Toronto reports seem contradictory, their reporting methodologies are different. Michigan's numbers cover the state's fiscal year-end, ending September 30, while Toronto's numbers represent the calendar year, ending December 31. Toronto's report includes only MSW collected by the five GTA municipalities; the Michigan report counts all waste from Canada, including ICI. Finally, a completely accurate comparison would factor the difference between cubic yards and metric tons.

¶7. (SBU) While Ontario provincial officials are confident that the agreement is being honored and have assured us that their counterpart U.S. officials are satisfied with the progress, we have not heard from any Michigan officials. The final test may be whether an attempt to legally proscribe trash shipments is re-introduced by Michigan's representatives.

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